critical digest

VOL. V No. 6 October 20, 1952

The Weekly Newsletter Digest of the Current New York Theatre Scene

New York Openings This Week

Gilbert & Sullivan Operettas-Hellinger, 10/20/52. S.M.Chartock presents repertory program starring Martyn Green, Robert Rounseveille and Ella Halman. Directed by producer; musical conductor Lehman Engel. First week The Mikado, second week Pirates of Penzance, third week HMS Pinafore and Trial by Jury, fourth week Iolanthe.

Digests of Current Reviews-late reviews back page

Time of the Cuckoo-Empire, 10/15/52. First controversial serious play of season drew split reviews for Arthur Laurentz script, while star Shirley Booth received unanimous, spirited rave notices. Times, News, Journal American, Eagle, and Press reviewers praised all departments of Robert Whitehead and Walter Fried production. Dissenters feared that in spite of Booth's superb acting characters failed to come alive. Director Harold Clurman was credited with fine job by most, while Dino deLuca in his New York debut received widely diverse notices. Charming, sentimental, intelligently acted and written, summed up Chapman, News, Kerr, Herald Tribune, and Watts, Post, blamed author for getting his characters in unbelievable situations. Coleman, Mirror, noted first nighters enjoyed show, though he turned thumbs down because it was so sketchily written.

In Any Language-Cort, 10/8/52. Two weekly reviewers found new comedy by Edmund Beloin and Henry Garson quite amusing most of time, though they did join majority, in believing director George Abbott and cast starring Uta Hagen had to suffer with a weak, one idea script. Dissenters doubted if there was enough humor to sustain evening. Newsweek and Billboard aisle-sitters joined "pro" ranks, latter believing second act weaker than first. Bron, Variety, credited authors with cute idea that never seemed to get off the ground. Keating, Cue, awarded honors to Gloria Marlowe and Francine Bond. Gibbs, New Yorker, blamed authors for lack of invention or a real gift for satire.

Buttrio Square-Century, 10/14/52. Daily reviewers unanimously panned new musical play presented by Edward Woods and Gen Genovese as deadly dull. Susan Johnson, blonde singer, was applauded by most as a newcomer worth watching, but book by Genovese and Billy Gilbert, lyrics by Genovese and music by Arthur Jones and Fred Stamer were marked down as out-dated, generally untalented, and especially unfunny. Several, including McClain, Journal American, enjoyed fine dance numbers staged by Eugene Loring; but most called the music downright terrible. Atkinson, Times, wondered why so many competent people ever got into a jam. Chapman, News, thought tales of show's pre-opening troubles would have made a better musical. Except for Johnson, reviewers had few kind words for cast members.

The Gambler-Lyceum, 10/15/52. Two daily critics recommended Alfred Drake and Edward Eager's adaptation of Italian philosophical melodrama by Ugo Betti. Majority voted "con" because of confusing, wordy script, plus wooden characters. Pollock, Compass, and Cooke, Wall Street Journal, okayed it, though they admitted it would probably be a Broadway flop. Both retained their interest throughout. Drake in serious role was praised by most, while supporting cast headed by Percy Warem, Philip Coolidge and Anne Burr rated plaudits. Atkinson, Times, estimated that after three visits he may have discovered what authors were aiming at. Jo Mielziner's sets cheered by all. Coleman, Mirror, blames author's nightmare of Pirandello, Hamlet and mid-European expressionism.

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' NYC THEATRE INDEX '

D - Daily W - Weekly M - Monthly B -.Broadcast

DT - NY Times	DJC - Journal of Commerce	WCM - Chr Science Monitor
DH - NY Herald Tribune	DWJ - Wall Street Journal	WC - Commonweal
DN - NY News	DWW - Women's Wear	WCU - Cue
DM - NY Mirror	WB - Billboard	WN - Nation
DC - NY Compass	WV - Variety	WNR - New Republic
DP - NY Post	WCD - Critical Digest	WNS - Newsweek
DJ - NY Journal American	WGN - George Jean Nathan	WNY - New Yorker
DW - NY World Tele-Sun	WWM - Ward Morehouse	WSR - Saturday Review
DB - Brooklyn Eagle	BC - WCBS Bill Leonard	WT - Time
DL - L.I.Press	BL - New Leader, WEVD	MP - Park East

Shows are rated as to how the critics liked them not if they think they will be hits. Pro means the critic stated directly that he recommends show for an entertaining or stimulating evening.

BEATRICE LILLIE-10/2/52	PROS: 100% RAVE NOTICES
THE FOUR POSTER-10/24/51	PROS: 19 CON: DH DP WGM WWM BL WC WNY NONE: DWJ WN WNR WSR
GUYS AND DOLLS-11/24/50	PROS: 29 CON: WN
THE KING AND I-3/29/51	PROS: 29 CON: WN
IN ANY LANGUAGE-10/8/52	PROS: DJ DB WNS WB CON: DT DH DN DM DP DC DWW WV DJC DWM WT WNY WC
THE MALE ANIMAL-4/30/52	PROS: 27 NONE: WGN WNR MP
THE MOON IS BLUE-3/8/51	PROS: 26 CON: WC WGN NONE: WN MP
MRS. McTHING-2/20/52	PROS: 20 CON: DM DJ BC BL WNR WT WGB NONE: WNR
PAL JOEY-1/3/52	PROS: 28 CON: BL NONE: WNR
NEW FACES OF 1952-5/16/52	PROS: 25 CON: DP WT WGN NONE: WN WNR
MR. PICKWICK-9/17/52	PROS: 18 CON: DT DP DM DW WWM WV BL WSR NONE: WC WNR WN MP
POINT OF NO RETURN-12/31/52	PROS: 25 CON: DW BL WN WNR WT
SOUTH PACIFIC-4/7/49	PROS: 29 CON: WT
WISH YOU WERE HERE-6/25/52	PROS: DN DC DB DL DJC WV BL CON: 16 NONE: DWW WCD WGN WCM WNR MP

' Vaudeville '

Duke Ellington heads new show at Paramount, supported by The Ravens, Bunny Briggs and Howell and Bowser...Alice Ghostley, New Faces, run at Blue Angel extended...Danny Kaye scheduled for Palace before New Year's...Beatrice Lillie considered for Waldorf Astoria Empire Room, Marlene Dietrich turning down offer...Brooklyn Strand considering return to vaudeville.

Music Hall stage show recommended by Herm, Variety, who especially enjoyed flawless precision of Rockettes, fine good taste of Jewish religious number and unusual dancing antics of Will Mahoney...First Roxy show under new management, starring Mary Small, tabbed good standard blend of variety and spectacle by Variety reviewer.

' Yiddish Theatre '

My Lucky Day, Yiddish-American musical produced at Second Avenue Theatre starring Selma Kaye, enjoyed by five daily reviewers and panned by trade paper critic. All noted script contained 50 percent English. Singing of star applauded for saving dull book.

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' Out of Town Tryouts '

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Margaret Sullavan is mainstay of The Deep Blue Sea trade paper critics report on New Haven tryout of John C. Wilson and Alfred de Liagre's presentation of Terrence Rattigan's new drama. Without her script adds up to a big nothing, comments Golly, Billboard; while Bone, Variety, notes there is really nothing wrong with script except that it doesn't have enough impact...Dial M for Murder should arrive in winner's circle, predicts Eck, Variety, after Hartford viewing because of Maurice Evans, a good story and good content...The Climate of Eden, Moss Hart's new drama which debuted in Wilmington, should be a hit if author will get rid of excess baggage and bring his play into focus, advises Klep, Variety...Fig Leaf, John Huntington production of new comedy by Norman Brooks and John Gerstad which opened in Chicago, has dim prospects for Broadway, pans Dave, Variety. Basic premise is shallow, excess of cuss words do not help.

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' Late Reviews '

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Bernardine-Playhouse 10/16/52. Warmth and understanding of Mary Chase's new comedy of youth impressed daily reviewers more than merits of what many considered a sloppy script. But Times, Herald-Tribune,News,Mirror,WT&S critics forgave what they considered poo r writing for the over-all result. Post,Eagle and Women's Wear aisle sitters dissented,mostly because they doubted main premises of Chase on youth. Cast headed by Johnny Stewart ,John Kerr and Beverly Lawrence were generally okayed, as was direction of Guthrie McClintic . Pro duction was supervised by late Irving L. Jacobs. Chapman,News, tagged script a little sweetheart of a comedy, while Atkinson,Times, firmly believes the author knows more about youth than any living writer. Kerr,Herald Tribune, is convinced that for all her untidiness,Chase is gifted with genuine imagination. He did fear that the director made error in directing part of show as farce. Coleman,Mirror,suggested actors should relax more in first act. Watts, Post,without being specfic,noted that result of evening left him grumpy. Sheaffer,Eagle , turned thumbs down because the author seemed too eager to understand youth in her labored whimsy. Dash,WWD, enjoyed some scenes,but entire production refused to jell.

The Millionairess-Shubert 10/17/52. Katharine Hepburn's per - formance, histronic and/or physical,amused and amazed the daily reviewers. News, Post and Eagle appraisers thought it by itself interesting enough to overcome faults of a bad play by GBS . Only Sheaffer,Eagle thought script,though 3rd rate Shaw,was worthwhile. Even poor Shaw is more delightful than any other comedy writer,he added. Times man marked play off as [illegible] anti-climax to a brillant preface that certainly wasn't worth all the energy involved. Kerr, Herald Tribune,merely noted that star was beautiful,vital and no t very good. Chapman,News,who recommended show,would like to see star wrestle with Tallulah Bankhead. Hawkins,WT&S,thought it might have been bearable if a little wit had been added to direction and performances. McClain,Journal American,is positive without the star and by an unknown author the show would have never opened,much less sold out for its entire engagement. Cyril Ritchard won top acting honors, with verdicts split on Robert Helpmann's performance in the Theatre Guild production staged by Michael Benthall. Watts,Post,who first viewed show in London,still believes star has breathed vitality and dramatic interest into a basically tedious and distasteful script.

' Green Room Department '

BOSTON CENSORSHIP PANNED...Action of See the Jaguar producers to bypass Boston because of deletions and changes demanded by Boston censor moved Hughes, Boston Herald, to ask by what right does any one man excise such capricious authority. Public, she insisted, is far more intelligent and possessed of better taste than self-appointed regulators think. Audience is interested in first class entertainment, not pornography, obscenity or whatever else the censor presumably saves it from. Out-dated laws setting up censors have gorwn mouldy with time, she concluded.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...Jose Ferrer, the busiest actor of our time, is probably satisfied Old Vic guest star job held up, notes Sylvester, News...No one more deserving of stardom than Yul Brynner, comments Morehouse, WT&S...Low cost of Beatrice Lillie production may lure new investors to theatres, predicts Chapman, News...Lillie is a great and magnificent clown equal to W.C.Fields, Jimmy Durante, Bobby Clark, nominates Watts, Post.

COLUMN TIPS...An actor in Sardi's passed out free ducats to his opening night, Farrell reports...My Name Is Legion, National Association for Mental Health drama, may be brought to Broadway, hears Walker...Kilgallen wonders how Ella Logan could fit in Maggie, a role designed for Mary Martin.

NY TO LA...Hollywood film producers are showing renewed interest in Broadway, Variety survey finds. Prices to playwrights have shown tendency to come down with only hit musicals winning top figures. Active participating in new plays is practically non-existent this season. Shows which producers have expressed interest in include In Any Language, Time of the Cuckoo, Bernardine, Dial M for Murder, The Deep Blue Sea.

MAIL BOX...Eighteenth century producers of Shakespeare not only changed titles, but changed scripts themselves, reminds Shipley, New Leader. Parts were often written in...Bad service in handling mail orders for tickets charged by Variety reader. Trade paper headlined "Here We Go Again; Be King to Theatre Goers."

WISHFUL THINKING...Eight hundred books published a year by Macmillan and Doubleday made NBC Leon Pearson, Critic at Large, ponder thought of American theatre bringing to life that many plays per year.

INTERVIEW HI LITES...Mary Chase, Bernardine author, gets her ideas for plays by just sitting and letting what comes in the door come in, she revealed to Hawkins, WT&S ...Benefit audiences for tryouts are of little help, Wish You Were Here director Joshua Logan told Coleman, Mirror, for they usually know each other and their appraisals are self-conscious.

' Theatre News Roundup '

Richard Hays has succeeded Walter Kerr as Commonweal critic...In Any Language first act being rewritten...7:00 PM curtain okayed in Port Authority Bus Terminal survey...Yul Brynner's name placed in lights The King and I marquee...Committee of Theatrical Producers held first meeting of year...League of NY Theatres elected Arthur Schwartz, president...Actors Equity and League of NY Theatres meet to discuss "blacklist" situation... 35,000 saw "Artists in Theatre" exhibit at Show Shop...Society of Authors Representatives appointed committee to work out plan for proposed producers' fund of $100,000 for new playwrights aid...Gertrude Lawrence estate denied that screen rights to star's life were up for sale now...George Bernard Shaw Memorial Appeal to be discontinued because of lack of public supoort...Jose Ferrer denied work permit to play in Old Vic's The Seagull...American Theatre Wing seeking actress to instruct young actresses how to dress attractively, course planned by Gertrude Lawrence...Paula Stone, Mike Sloane and Jack Donohue have formed organization to discover and build new talent.